

MAX KAMIEN.

(interviewed by Jan Walters)

Last edit 10/8/2026.

Q: *Today is 4 May 2026. My name is Jan Walters and I am a volunteer with the Jewish Historical and Genealogical Society of WA. I have the great pleasure of meeting with Max Kamien who has agreed very kindly to do an interview with me. Max has had oral histories written about him in the past which have focussed mainly on his professional career. This interview is actually going to be much more about his family background and probably the Jewish side of his upbringing. Let's start by giving me your date of birth please Max.*

MK: 21 July 1936.

Q: *Where were you born?*

MK: I was born in Miss Harvey's Hospital, Bulwer St, Highgate. The accoucheur was Dr Roly Nattrass. Dr Roly Nattrass was a new specialist and my mother had considerable difficulty getting pregnant and this was a very precious baby to her. It was 3 years after she married. She went to this new specialist and he was extremely worried that she wouldn't be able to pay the fee, which was 2 guineas.

Q: *My goodness. Interesting that it was in Bulwer Street and not in one of the hospitals?*

MK: No, there were a lot of nurses who did obstetrics. They set up a little obstetric unit in a house. They might have only 4 beds. The Tresillian Hospital in Nedlands was still delivering babies when I graduated in 1960. It is now a community art centre.

Q: *What were the names of your parents?*

MK: Leon (Lutek) Israel Kamien and my mother was Gania or Jean. It started off as Lewin and morphed into Levin and then Levine.

Q: *Where were they born?*

MK: My father was born in New York in 1908. My mother was born in 1911 in Brest-Litovsk, which was on the border of Russia and Poland.

Q: *Do you know your grandparents on both your paternal and maternal side?*

MK: On the paternal side, my grandfather was Chaim (Hymie) Aaron Kamien and my grandmother was Chaya (Helen) Rotblit.

Q: *Where were they born?*

MK: They were born in Poland, in Warsaw.

Q: *At some stage they went to America. Is that right?*

MK: My grandfather went to America in 1905 and came back in 1911. I have seen the Ellis Island data of when they arrived. I think they left because life was getting increasingly more difficult for Jews. It's very unusual for people who migrated to America to go back to Poland but my grandmother had six siblings – five sisters and one brother. Her brother, Icek, was the youngest. I believe that she missed her family so they went back to Poland. I was checking up on where they lived

and they lived next to Dr Zamenhoff, the Esperanto man. He has been talked about recently.

Q: *Yes, Dr Eini.*

MK: I checked up recently, so yes they did live next to Dr Zamenhoff, which means they lived in a Jewish part of Warsaw. The fact that they lived in a unit means they were probably middle class. My grandfather, in 1920, owned a T-Model Ford. There weren't many T-Model Fords in Warsaw (50) so he was obviously doing well in business.

Q: *Do you know what the business was which he worked in?*

MK: I don't think it had a particular name but it was a textile type of business.

Q: *Was that making or selling, or both?*

MK: I am not sure about that – probably selling. His father Mordechi

Q: *This is your great grandfather?*

MK: Yes, on my paternal side. He was a rabbi. He had three wives. I presume - - -

Q: *They died?*

MK: Yes. He was known as "Mordechi der Frumer." He studied Torah all the time and did not work. He was supported by his sons. To my knowledge there were three brothers. The Gold family travelled to Warsaw where they went to a cemetery. The graves are still there. Had you gone with them you would have been able to read the Hebrew and maybe find them but the Golds couldn't. They were recorded as being there. I would have thought all the Jewish graves would have been made into roads and things like that but that is not the case.

Q: *Your great grandfather on your paternal side was a rabbi?*

MK: Yes.

Q: *Then your grandfather was in textiles. How many siblings did your father have?*

MK: Just one.

Q: *What was his name?*

MK: Avraham Joseph Kamien. He was Barbara Gold's father. He was 10 years younger.

I think my great great grandfather had a brick works in a province called Ploske in central Poland. I think he would have been fairly well off. My father knew of him but I don't know whether he knew him.

On the grandmother's side, the Rotblits, all her sisters perished and the youngest brother, Icek also perished in Auschwitz. Two years ago I got a letter from Israel saying they had traced me as a descendant of Icek who owned a block of land in Israel. He bought it in 1937 but they didn't say where it was.

The deal was that reparation would be paid on this land and the Agency would get half of it and I would get the other half. I haven't pursued that. I said I would but I haven't pursued it because Israel has other things to worry about. If things settle down I will pursue it. Not for the money but as a way of finding out more about my antecedents.

At that time it was clear that at least the younger Rotblit brother wanted to live in Palestine. I don't know who occupies it. That is what I sort of know.

At the end of the Second World War my father received two letters from Displaced Persons Camps, each addressed to Mr Kamien Australia. One letter took 6 days to get to him and the other 10 days. The 10 day one was Wolf Glatenberg. This is on the grandmother's side, so it was a cousin of my father on his mother's side, and Zigmunt Ejbuszyc's letter took 6 days.

Q: *Wow.*

MK: My father brought them out here quick smart. Glatenberg had lost his fiancée. He wasn't in a concentration camp but had made his way to Russia, so he was in a labour camp. He had refused to take Russian citizenship but eventually got out. He went to Melbourne and started up a fruit shop. He developed diabetes and then got gangrene in one leg and required an amputation. My father brought him back here and he lived as an independent in the Maurice Zeffert Home. He was a very nice man. He was a very sensitive man.

Zygmunt was a different kettle of fish. I remember all these watches he had up his arm. What's the good watch, the top watch?

Q: *Rolex?*

MK: Rolex. He had all these Rolex watches and lots of Leica cameras. He survived. He is the one I asked if you could find the interview he did. I don't know whether he fell out with my mother. I don't know what happened. My parents used to disappear about 8.30 am and come back at 6 o'clock at night. We had a house keeper (Louisa Matilda Moss) and Zygmunt ran off with her. I don't know if that influenced mum. They married and moved to residential accommodation in the Maurice Zeffert Home, in the independent living section. That was the basic genealogy that I know. (Zygmunt was interviewed by Helen Cohen-Robertson as part of her series of Holocaust survivors living in Perth. I will search for the interview that is supposed to be in the WA State Library.).

Q: *Where did your parents marry?*

MK: In Perth. They met in that hall?

Q: *Princes Hall at the old PHC?*

MK: Yes.

Q: *What year was that, Max?*

MK: That was New Year's Day, 1933.

My father came to Australia with his father. The story was that they got out of Poland when my father was about 16 and went to Palestine. They were part of what was euphemistically called 'Grabski's Aliyah.' (Wladyslaw Grabski was the prime minister and finance minister of Poland? He introduced taxation reforms that placed a heavy burden on Jewish merchants and resulted in increased Jewish immigration to Palestine which became known as Grabski's Aliyah. They lived in Haifa very close to the Bahai Temple.

They had 1000 pounds sterling with them, which was a lot of money. They went into business, but as with many other businesses of that period, the business failed. They finished up working on the wharf in Haifa. A cattle boat came in from Perth. There was a merchant seaman on it named Mr Berinshan. He said, "Go to Perth in Western Australia. It's a goldena medina. You buy wool, you sell wool and you make a fortune." They didn't have any money so they came steerage aka "cattle class".

Q: *This was your father and your grandfather?*

MK: Yes.

Q: *Where was your grandmother?*

MK: They stayed in Haifa. They had whatever money was left to live on.

Chaim and Lutek came on the Ville de Strasbourg boat, which was infamous for the conditions which steerage passengers endured. It took 5 weeks and it was hot. When they landed they were met by Vera Rosenwax, a leader in Jewish Welfare.

She took them to a room in, Stirling Street, Northbridge, which she had booked through Jewish Aid. My mother's side was very different.

Q: *Hold on. Just before you do that, what year did your father and grandfather come to Perth?*

MK: Early November 1927.

Q: *Your father's mother came from Haifa how much later?*

MK: Almost 2 years later, with Abe. They came second class. That's a story.

Q: *Do you want to tell that story?*

MK: Yes. They didn't get them over quicker because they didn't want them to travel cattle class. They wanted to have enough money to buy a second-class ticket.

On my mother's side, Joseph Levine was a pastry cook from Bialystok. He wanted to enlarge his business. The government wouldn't let him so he came by himself to Australia.

He landed in Perth I think in about 1925. He got off the boat. There was no Mrs Rosenwax to meet him so he wandered around by himself. He took the train into Perth and he wandered into Central Arcade. There was a patisserie there. They spoke Yiddish. So he got a job there and then.

Q: *Do you remember the name of the patisserie or the owner?*

MK: Yes, it was called 'The Piccadilly'.

Q: *Do you know the proprietor?*

MK: Mr Shneider. Joseph Levine worked there for about 5 years and then he tried to start up his own business on The Esplanade, Perth. This business was like the coffee house we have now. But he was so far ahead of his time that it didn't work. He went to Melbourne but before he went he applied for citizenship and for the right to bring his wife and four children. This was getting on to 5 years of his being on his own.

He had a reference from Rabbi Freedman. We still have a copy of the letter. Joseph stated, "I am a man of means. I have 5 pounds in the bank." So he went to Melbourne and set up in Lygon Street, Carlton. They then shifted to Acland St Kilda and the shop is still there.

The grandchildren went back for the 80th anniversary, which actually turned out to be the 84th anniversary. There is an Israeli guy who runs it. He is now getting old. We went back there with the grandchildren because they had this party. I have photos. The St Kilda Council has named the road next to it as The

Monarch Lane. It's the go to place for Polish cheesecake and chocolate kugelhupf.

There is a side story. After this event I had to go to Sydney. I was told there would be a write up about the anniversary party. In the morning I bought 'The Age' and took it on the aeroplane but I couldn't see anything about the party whatsoever. When I got to Sydney I rang up Cousin Joey and said, "There is nothing there." He said, "Yes, there is. It's on the sporting page." It wasn't in the cooking section. This was because five St Kilda football players had attended because it was their go to cake shop so that's what the story was all about.

Q: *Isn't that gorgeous? The family over there was your mother's father's family?*

MK: My mother's father and mother and two sisters and a brother.

Q: *They were in Melbourne?*

MK: Yes.

Q: *Did they stay in Melbourne?*

MK: They stayed in Melbourne. The butcher shop next to the first shop was Smorgons. Do you know Smorgons?

Q: *Yes. What a small world. How did your father meet your mother?*

MK: At Princes Hall.

Q: *Why was she there?*

MK: When they came here, when he brought the family here, they came to Perth.

Q: *I thought you said they went to Melbourne.*

MK: He went to Melbourne. No, sorry. They came to Perth and worked in Perth then they all moved but my mother had since got married so she stayed. She would always refer to the "mishuggenas over in Melbourne".

Q: *It wasn't until your grandmother on your maternal side came with the other kids to Perth that your parents met?*

MK: Yes, they came here. They lived at 10 Hope Street, just off Lake Street, Northbridge. They then moved to 234 Lake Street, which is still there. There was a half house with the Blank family.

Q: *When your father's parents came out here, what did they do in Perth? Where did they live and what did they do?*

MK: They lived in this half house. My grandmother didn't do anything in particular. My grandfather became a travelling salesman. Unbelievable. He was quite deaf by this time. I had just turned 17 and had just got my driver's licence and he was lost. Nobody knew where he was. We got a call from someone in Northam. He had a suitcase and was going around door to door selling women's stockings and things like that.

I got in my father's Pontiac car, which is a story, and I drove this large petrol guzzling car to Northam, which is the furthest I had ever driven, to pick up my grandfather and brought him back. At that stage he agreed to stop being a travelling salesman.

After my parents married they started selling clothes in the street, in Murray Street. That was like a busker. They would buy six dresses and sell them in the

street and make a bit of profit. My uncle, Mr Leon Grodeck who was married to my Auntie Sonia, objected to them doing this so they got run off. They rented a shop at the corner of William Street and Murray Street. You can still see the name "Maxim" on the wall.

Q: *On which corner was the shop?*

MK: It was on the southwest corner. My mother, who was the real business brain, said, "The basic wage is 2 pounds. We are selling dresses for 8 pounds and people can't afford the dresses so why don't we make our own dresses and sell them for 2 pounds?" So they did this. My father, who had no experience in this whatsoever, started a business, a factory, in Murray Street near Barrack Street, Perth. It was opposite Boans.

Q: *And he knew nothing about it?*

MK: He didn't know how to do all these things. My mother knew how to do things.

Q: *She knew the business side?*

MK: She also knew about clothes. That's what they did. The war started and the factory was commandeered for uniforms. They were declared to be – I don't know what the word is – "essential" workers. The younger brother, Abe, went off with the 29th Battalion. It seemed to work.

They moved to a bigger shop. They rented from Walsh's – Mr Walsh was a gambler. My father got on all right with him. My father never was a gambler. Mr Walsh used to bet all his money on horses and lose it on the weekend. He would turn up on the Monday and borrow some money from my father, so that worked well. He always paid it back.

That relationship seemed to be a very successful one. He never put the rent up ever. He then died and his sons...

Q: *I'm just going to stop here now.*

Q: *We are just going to do the second tape. We will go back. Your father was a few days off 19 when he came out to Australia. What did he do until the time he married to earn income?*

MK: On Day 4 he got a job in a slipper factory run by Mr Trigger.

Q: *Was that a Jewish person?*

MK: Yes. His job was to nail the sole of the foot to the felt with tacks. They taught him how to do this. You held these lead tacks in your mouth. On Day 2 he swallowed them, so he spent the next week in Royal Perth Hospital waiting for the tacks to come out!

Q: *Everything was intact, was it?*

MK: Yes. He worked for him for 4 years and then there was the depression and the factory went under. At this time he was married and that's when they started their business.

Q: *What did your mum do prior to her getting married?*

MK: She sold things. When she came here she got a job in a clothes factory.

- Q: *That gave her a bit of a background. I have diverted you from what you were going to say before we backtracked to give that bit of history. I don't remember what we were going to talk about. Do you, Max?*
- MK: Who was I talking about?
- Q: *We won't worry. Your parents married and stayed at the address you have already mentioned.*
- MK: Yes but when mum got pregnant they decided to get out. They bought a block of land in Mount Lawley at 31 Inverness Crescent, Mount Lawley and they built this quite reasonable house. It was a very big block of land and the total cost was 2200 pounds. At the same time, just over the hill about 200 metres away, they built another house at 10 Holmfirth Street, Mount Lawley (now Menora) for my father's parents.
- My grandfather, although he was deaf, was just a very nice man. He was a very well-mannered man who was always very well dressed. He had a T model Ford. He never drove it but he had it. It was in the garage but it was never driven by him. They were obviously very quickly - - -
- Q: *Getting on their feet?*
- MK: Yes. The place they built in Mount Lawley I would call it middle class living. I wouldn't call it high middle class, I wouldn't call it low middle class but middle middle class. There were lots of Jewish people around there as neighbours. There were the Gollingers, the Gubbays, the Lewises, Catts's. They really were all hard workers.
- Q: *Did they have just the one shop or more?*
- MK: No, they only had one.
- Q: *How long did that operate for?*
- MK: The Maxim shop closed very early because they needed a bigger shop. It was a very small shop.
- Q: *Did they then go to Loretta?*
- MK: They went to Loretta, in 1938, which they rented.
- Q: *Do you know the address of that shop?*
- MK: Yes. 705 Hay St. It was very close to the corner. There was Walsh's, there was Fitch's chemist shop and then there was Walsh's big men's store and Loretta was one little part of the men's store. When I was about 15 or 16, maybe a bit younger, I remember that the owner of Walsh's died and his sons put the rent up.
- My father looked around for somewhere else. He came across the Sandover store which was in Hay Street, further up towards Barrack Street. The shop was for sale. There was no way he could afford that. There was another guy, Brian Coppin, a WA Inc. man. He was in a similar position. He needed a shop, but he couldn't afford it.
- So they went and had a cup of tea and came to an agreement. Most of the agreements were shake of hand. The deal was that Coppin was going to put in two thirds of the money and my father would put in one third. One partner couldn't sell out without the agreement of the other. My parents agonised.

My father agonised twice as much as my mother as to this very large loan, the likes of which he could never envisage. Anyway, my mother pushed him. It was very successful.

Q: *You have another sibling.*

MK: Josephine came 10 years after I was born.

Q: *Let's go back to when you were a child. What primary school did you go to, Max?*

MK: Before I went to primary school I went to kindergarten at the Alexander Park Tennis Club pavilion. It was run by a person called Miss Green. There were a lot of Jewish boys there. I remember playing Little Boy Blue and I think Sonny Gubbay was something else. All the boys were there. That closed down.

Before I went to primary school I was at Sacred Heart School in Learoyd Street, Mt Lawley for one year. I have very little memory of that. I mean, I have a vivid memory of the kindergarten.

Q: *But not of Grade 1?*

MK: I sat in this class and there were two nuns who were crabby most of the time. (I remember my Mum saying that she did not like nuns because they never bought any dresses).

Apparently I sat next to a guy who became a judge because he sent me a photo. After one year I went to North Perth State School. It was Sonny Gubbay and Stanley Catts' job to take me to school.

Q: *Was that by bus?*

MK: No, we walked.

Q: *It wasn't that far?*

MK: Well, it was probably a 20 minute walk.

Q: *Was Sonny a bit older than you?*

MK: Stanley was older than Sonny and he was the ringleader. Sonny was a year younger than Stanley and 2 years older than I was. There was this epic event where they used to tease me. They would say, "We're taking you to Melbourne today and we are leaving you there." I would say, "I have a grandmother. In Melbourne"

One day Stanley Catts – Sonny was mischievous and easily led – tied me to a tree instead of taking me to school. It so happened that my mother came by on her bicycle, which is another story as she never was a very good rider of bicycles. She saw me tied to the tree and she saw Stanley there. She got very angry and took her handbag and bashed them over their heads several times. She said, "You come to my house and you eat my food and do this to my Maxie."

Q: *She wasn't going to let them get away with that. You said that she and your father left the house early because they were in business and worked really long hours. Is that right? You had somebody in the house who was the housekeeper?*

MK: Yes.

Q: *How long did that go on for?*

MK: It went on until I was about 17. I hated the housekeepers. I didn't like them. I had one I liked when I was very young, before school. It was a lady called Myrtle Doig from Kalgoorlie. I kept writing to her.

Q: *Did they live in?*

MK: Yes. Still to this day I have a thing about people in the house. Not guests but there was a lady, when Jackie was alive, who Jackie befriended and she was in great need. She comes once a week on Friday and she is okay. She is like a friend but I would much prefer if she came once a fortnight. Those sorts of things remain.

Q: *You were a very good student?*

MK: Well, when I went to North Perth State School I think there was an infant's class. I would have been 5 and turning 6 in that year I think. I was in 1B and then I was in 2B. I recall that I didn't like being in 2B. I didn't like being in a "B" class; I wanted to be in an "A" class. The teacher of 2B was Miss Morton. She saw my potential and so I finished up in 3A.

I played no sport whatsoever apart from the fact that we had a tennis table. My uncle had purchased it for us during the war. He was in the press corp. He was a sergeant. He was a good table tennis player and he used to play with Alex Rosenwax.

Anyway, they were very good and I used to watch them, so that was the only thing I could sort of play.

Q: *Why did you not play anything else?*

MK: Because my parents never played anything.

Q: *And it wasn't a high priority. Who were the Jewish kids in your class?*

MK: Deidre Zusman (now Greenfeld). I don't think there were a huge number of Jewish kids in my class. There was Eddy Gunzburg, Norm Chosid. Geoffrey Davis, Sarah Schwartz. John Cohen. Anyway, we had a teacher in Sixth Year called Mr Smith, Ernie Smith. He was regarded as the best teacher of his time. I had a patient who was 99 and who had been a school teacher. She said to me, "You know, the very best teacher that I ever came across was Ernie Smith but you would be too young to know him." I said, "Well, actually I was in his class in his last year."

We used to do mock exams at 7 o'clock every Friday morning, so 2 hours, for the scholarship exam. In our class I think we got 28 scholarships out of 100.

Q: *Did you ever have tutoring?*

MK: There was a tutor who used to tutor a lot of the Jewish kids – a Schenberg who was a tutor? He had been a medical student and he had dropped out of medicine because he had scarlet fever or something else and he couldn't carry on with his studies but he ended up being a tutor.

Q: *You then got the scholarship to Perth Modern School. When you were at primary school did you get to do any things like scouts or cubs? Were you involved in any Jewish activities outside of primary school? There probably wasn't that much going on then.*

MK: No. I used to go to some things at the Princes Hall. I remember going to a communal seder at Princes Hall.

Q: *There is a beautiful photo of one of those seders.*

MK: I started riding a bicycle to school when I was about 10. John Cohen was another of the scholarship boys. I recall the headmaster came into the Class 4 and announced that I had a baby sister. He suggested that I have the rest of the day off and that I should ride my bike to the Mercy Hospital. He thought it wise to take John Cohen to ride with me.

Q: *To make it safer?*

MK: That sort of stuff was very nice.

Q: *Tell me, were your parents at all religious?*

MK: No. Before that, as an insurance policy I also sat for the Hale School scholarship and I got the Hale School scholarship.

Q: *But it was easier to go to Perth Modern?*

MK: No. My father said nothing. He said, "It's your decision." Well, I didn't know anybody who went to Hale School and I had all these Jewish friends and other friends so I wanted to go to Modern School. I turned down the Hale School scholarship. This was the full scholarship because there was also a half scholarship.

Mr Murphy, 'Spud' Murphy, who was headmaster of Hale School when it was near the Kings Park Tennis Club, rang my father and said he would like to see my father and me, so we went. My father was never very confident in that sort of situation. I could see he didn't like it. Spud Murphy said, "If you come to Hale School, you will be the dux of the school. You will meet all the people who count in our society and you will have a certain stellar career. If you go to Modern School you will be just another bright boy amongst all the other bright boys and you won't meet anybody and your career will be limited because of your lack of knowledge and rapport with all these other people."

Again my father didn't say anything and he drove me back to North Perth State School. At dinner he said, "What did you decide?" I said, "I want to go to Modern School" and that was the conversation. I am very glad I went to Modern School as I am not a Hale School boy.

Q: *You had a wonderful time at Perth Modern?*

MK: I had a developing time. At Perth Modern School – first of all there was a certain kudos being a Modern School person. You had a great big sphynx on your uniform as you walked around the street and everyone said, "There is a very bright boy there." It was an amazing school really. There were 50 boys and 50 girls in each year. On the first day of school you would go to Mr Sampson, the headmaster, and tell him your home address. He had this big map and a compass. He'd ask, "Do you ride a bicycle?" "Yes." "Would you ride the bicycle to school?" "Yes." "Well, you are entitled to a bicycle maintenance allowance of one shilling a week."

Q: *Isn't that gorgeous?*

MK: That was the first thing. The other thing was that you had to nominate your sport and I didn't have one. I had one swimming class but I was in no team – none. There was a football team, a swimming team, a running team. Mignone Gubbay was top of the state school. She was the scholarship winner, the top primary

school student but that was somewhat later. I didn't know what to say so I said tennis.

Q: *And there began your love of tennis.*

MK: That was the first time. At the end of the first year at high school you have to make a decision as to whether you are going into the "arts" stream or the "science" stream. I had lunch with a colleague recently, Colin Ross. I am still friendly with him. Colin said, "You know, we were really short changed. The science group were sent down to the Thomas Street Annexe", which was the Thomas Street Primary School which had been vacated. It wasn't green like Modern School; it was just sandy. Because it was about a kilometre away we didn't go up to Modern School even for lunch or anything. I missed out on those facilities.

Q: *The facilities at the other place and the social side?*

MK: There was art, there was drama, there was singing. I mean, I missed out on all of that. The science classes didn't do that. I did start playing sport and I found I could hit a tennis ball. When I was 14 I took out our table tennis table and started playing. Don Gollinger was a first-year medical student and I was a second year high school student. He failed his year because he was playing too much table tennis but I could beat him at table tennis.

Anyway, he said, "There is a state championship on. You should go in it." I found out how to go in it and I entered. It was played in the Perth Town Hall. I played against this guy and got absolutely annihilated. I then got on the tram and went home and that was that. I wasn't too disturbed by it.

Q: *It was an experience.*

MK: I must finish the story. The next day I get a phone call. "That chap who beat you was 17 and you were playing in the Under 16s", so I went back and played some matches and got in the final of the Under 16s. I played the son of the president of the Table Tennis Association. He was leading 20:12 in the first set and then he went to water, so I beat him. That made me the Under 16 State Table Tennis Champion. Arthur Marshall was the Under 19 champion.

Q: *He was the tennis player eventually.*

MK: Arthur Marshall and I played an exhibition match against Johnny Leach and Michel Haguenauer. Johnny Leach was number one in the world and Haguenauer was number six. They had a handicap, which was their racquets, were this big! Tiny It was only one game, an exhibition match. I am the sort of person who will try anything. I am interested in everything.

Q: *Can we now go back please? Your parents were not religious?*

MK: My parents were very Jewish. My father was a fluent Hebrew speaker. He spoke some Arabic and they spoke some Yiddish in the house. My mother was imbued with Yiddishkeit. She had a huge collection of records of Yiddish singers. Although they went to shule - - -

Q: *On yomtovim?*

MK: Some weekends she cooked a cholent and all the various friends would turn up. There were the Levins, the Edelmans, the Mackays, the Seglers. They would all turn up for the cholent.

They used to go and play this very unusual game they invented. It was like deck tennis but they used a 7 pound medicine ball. Sam Edelman was very strong. He was a furniture man. He used to hurl this thing around. It was quite dangerous when you think about it. One day my father got it on the end of his finger and he had a dislocated finger joint. It so happened that on that day a chap called Ben Hanneman was staying with us. He was 21 years of age and had already graduated in medicine. He was an "enfant terrible" as it were. He said, "I know what to do but I have never done it, so we are not doing it." We therefore all went off – Sam Edelman and everyone – to Royal Perth Hospital. The registrar there ummed and aahed. And yanked it into place. No, they weren't religious.

Q: *Max, did they have a Friday night?*

MK: No. What we used to do was that after school I used to ride my bicycle to Mr Smetana's chicken farm in Tuart Hill and he would tie the chicken by its legs to my bicycle, after having killed the chicken, and I would ride back and my grandmother would take the chicken to bits and make chicken soup and chicken. I had the shabbat evening with them. Just me.

Q: *With your father's parents?*

MK: Yes.

Q: *Just you?*

MK: Yes, but there was never anything religious about it. My grandmother lit candles. My grandfather said a brocha for wine and bread but that's all.

Q: *So every Friday night you'd be with them?*

MK: Yes.

Q: *Did you like doing that with them? Did you have a nice relationship with them?*

MK: Yes, I had a good relationship with them. I don't have bad relationships with anyone. It wasn't a learning relationship. He didn't talk about his old life. There was no attempt to teach me all the rituals or anything like that. I could see they liked having me.

Q: *Did you go to Hebrew School?*

MK: Ah!

Q: *I love this one. Okay?*

MK: I did go to Hebrew School. I hated going to Hebrew School.

Q: *Like most people. Do you remember your teachers?*

MK: The only teacher I can remember – and I am trying to check this out – was a Mr Sternberg.

Sternberg. I was in Class 6 and Mr Sternberg had rings on his fingers and was a hyper-excitabile man.

Q: *He probably had ADHD!*

MK: He hit Judy Bloomfield and I jumped up and hit him and then jumped out the window. I was chased as far as Hyde Park by Rabbi Ruben-Zacks. They gave up at Hyde Park and I walked back to Inverness Crescent. My parents were in Melbourne doing buying and my grandfather, who had been one of the first

residents at Maurice Zeffert Home and didn't like it, was now living with us. He was very deaf. Rabbi Ruben-Zacks and Mr Sternberg were at the front door.

I hid behind the sofa but I could see a bit of them. They were telling my grandfather what a terrible person I was. Since he couldn't hear them, he kept saying "Yes" and smiling and saying "Maxie is a very nice boy." Anyway, I was expelled so I didn't go back there.

Q: *Was it an accident that Judy Bloomfield was hit?*

MK: I don't know whether it was an accident. I wonder if she remembers that. She was my putative girlfriend at the time. I don't even know if she noticed me! That was the end of that.

Before my bar mitzvah I had to learn my parsha and I was shunted along with Les Edelman to Leon Zeffert. Leon Zeffert had a jarrah ruler with which he used to hit me across the knuckles. Les was a better student than I was so he never hit him. I learned my parsha so that was okay.

I then got stuck on the 13 principles of faith – Maimonides 13 principles of faith. I said, "I don't believe that." They said, "You have to say it anyway" and I said, "No, you don't. You shouldn't say things you don't believe in." I had very early morality. I noticed people. I asked my father why some of the boys did not have any shoes and he said it was because their fathers drank away the money.

We used to have a Chinese market gardener who came in a truck and all the kids, including the Jewish kids, had various strategies for attracting his attention so another kid could pinch a banana or something. I said that was very wrong.

Q: *So you had very good morals and ethics?*

MK: So did my father. This was very young. What was the original question?

Q: *I don't know but what I would like to know is if you went to Habonim or anything like that?*

MK: Yes, but just to finish the religious thing, Maimonides, I said, "I'm not saying it" and to his credit Rabbi Ruben-Zacks, who I liked very much, said, "Oh, well, okay." The other person we were very friendly with in our family was Reverend Grochowski.

Q: *He was involved in the Jewish stage, wasn't he?*

MK: My mother acted on his Jewish stage but he also said the prayers.

Q: *He was the reverend or one of those things, wasn't he? What did he do?*

MK: He was a reverend but he was the person who does much of the praying.

Q: *The chasan?*

MK: Yes, the chasan. He was from Russia and he and my mother used to chat away in Russian. He used to often come for dinner. I can't remember his wife very much but his daughter was a very, very attractive lady albeit somewhat older than me. She was maybe 5 or 6 years older than me. She married and went to Melbourne. When I did a year at the Children's Hospital I saw quite a bit of her.

Q: *Your mother acted on the Jewish stage?*

MK: Yes, she did. My mother also could sing. It's interesting because we had my cousin once removed and he was saying, "Was there ever any musical talent in

our family?" I said, "No." My mother could only sing when she had had a couple of drinks. She was never a drunk. Whenever she went to Melbourne she would go to the Troika Club, the Russian club, at least twice.

I went there once with a girl from school. When you went there they said, "This is not a licensed premises" but they were serving vodka in coffee cups. You were supposed to get rid of everything if an inspector came. It never happened when I was there. On this occasion they had a Troika band and a singer. My mother wanted to sing so the singer stepped aside and my mother started singing Russian songs. She could really sing them. She was so much better – and she wouldn't hand over the microphone!

Q: *I am going to pause this.*

Q: *Today is 23 May 2026. This is the second part of an interview with Max Kamien. You were just recalling some of things about your father being a good student. Would you like to repeat that please?*

MK: Well, I have a report in Polish which I have had Polish people read to me. He was obviously a very good student. He told me that as a student he had aspired to become an engineer but the family left for Israel in 1923. He would have only been 15 and he never had the opportunity to go on with his education. He was a highly intelligent person.

He read quite a few books. He used to read a lot of history and philosophy books. There were a few books which I bought for him which were in the realm of fairly abstract philosophy.

Q: *Did he do that reading in English?*

MK: Yes.

Q: *You were telling me that both your parents spoke good English?*

MK: Very good English.

Q: *Your grandparents also spoke quite nice English?*

MK: Yes.

Q: *You weren't sure whether they could read English?*

MK: No, I'm not sure about that.

Q: *Your mother spoke good English but had a slight Polish accent. Is that right?*

MK: A slight Polish accent. She spoke English and Yiddish. She was totally fluent in Polish, Yiddish, English and Russian.

Q: *That's amazing. Did your father have any accent?*

MK: Very slight.

Q: *In the first interview I think we talked about you going to Jewish organisations – things like Habonim?*

MK: Yes. I went to Habonim because Alan Lewis was the leader and he rounded us up.

Q: *Do you remember who was in your group and the name of your group?*

MK: No.

Q: *None of the people in your group?*

MK: I don't remember any of that. I don't think I was a religious goer.

Q: *Alan Lewis was a charismatic character?*

MK: Yes. He was very much a Zionist in those days. I think he was 2 or 3 years older than I was but his intention at that stage was to go to Israel. His father had been a leader of the Jewish community here and I followed Alan for a long, long time. He had a very checkered career. He is not alive anymore.

Q: *Did he go to Israel?*

MK: Oh yes. He did architecture here and he then went to Israel where he lived on a kibbutz. He got to the stage of being the head architect of the kibbutz movement. He also served in the Haganah. I always thought he was a colonel but Sonny Gubbay told me he was a major. His character flaw destroyed him. He was a very sure person - he was always right. He fell out with the kibbutz movement and came back to Perth for a while. He was driving a taxi. I saw a fair bit of him because I was trying to help him get a job. He then went off with Sol Raiter's wife and went to Sydney.

Q: *We will leave him to the side. How old were you when you went to Habonim?*

MK: Gosh. I probably would have been 13 or 14 and I didn't go for very long. It might have been earlier than that.

Q: *Did you ever go to any Habonim camps?*

MK: I think I went to one Habonim camp. That was it.

Q: *Did that kindle any love of Israel for you, being part of Habonim?*

MK: No.

Q: *Were your parents Zionist?*

MK: Yes.

Q: *So they always supported things which were connected?*

MK: In a big way.

Q: *Did they have an influence on you? Did you then become quite Zionist because of your parents?*

MK: No.

Q: *You were never Zionist?*

MK: I think at the age of 10 or 11 I was quite aware of the Holocaust. That was probably because of my father's cousins who survived. He brought them to Australia. In later years I have been very surprised at how people of my age knew so little about their parents who had been through the Holocaust. Your brother-in-law is one.

Q: *Sol Majteles?*

MK: Yes. Sol's parents and other parents did not speak about it.

I was involved with setting up the Jewish Students' Society at the university when I first joined at 17. Leon Segal was the leader of that, the main person. He was a very good soccer player and I might have idolised him, I don't know. He would perhaps have been 4 years older than I was.

Q: *You helped establish AUJS, the Australian Union of Jewish Students, WA?*

MK: Yes. That was one of my first memories. I then went away, you see, because I went to Adelaide.

Q: *To do your medical studies?*

MK: Yes.

Q: *Were the Jewish students at the university Zionist or mainly with a Jewish focus?*

MK: I think there were some people, like Alan, who weren't actually at the university but there were a couple of people like him. I didn't see people who were really Zionist, in the sense that they were going to go back to Israel. There were great supporters of Israel, people like Sonny Gubbay. Stanley Catts went to Israel.

Q: *Have you spent time in Israel?*

MK: Yes.

Q: *When was that?*

MK: I got to Israel at the end of 1964.

Q: *What were you doing there?*

MK: I had been working for the Save the Children Fund and been in South Korea, which was totally poverty stricken. I had then been with the Swiss Red Cross.

Q: *That's a total opposite?*

MK: The Save the Children Fund had found me in Japan actually. G-d knows how they found me. They had a job going in Jordan and the jobs I did were usually 3 months. The doctors they employed worked for 21 months and then they had 3 months off. I filled in as a bit of a locum thing. It was a voluntary thing. They didn't pay me but they fed me. In South Korea I was getting 12 pounds a month and I was rich.

I decided that I would make my way very slowly to Jordan. I am a bit confused about this. From South Korea I went to Hong Kong in the Kwong Wah Hospital for Sir Tiger Ong. That's a different story.

Q: *Let's not concentrate on the hospital placements because I think that is covered in other interviews which have been done.*

MK: Okay. So, from there I went to Malaysia and worked in Singapore for a Jewish doctor and then went up to Malaysia and worked a bit there. I then made my way to India to work with the Tibetans in Nepal. I then decided to go to Israel by bus so I slowly made my way through what is now Pakistan to Peshawar where they played squash - the Khan brothers. I then went through Afghanistan. I was moving very slowly. I stopped for several weeks to coach the Afghanistan Davis Cup tennis team. I didn't know there was such a thing. Australia had always been in the top ranks but in fact in the Davis Cup it goes A, B, C, D, E and F and this was F.

I then went through Iran and Iraq. I had acquaintances in all of these places because of the Colombo Plan. Students from my University days all had uncles and such people. I finished up in Jordan in the town of Irbid. Is this recording?

Q: *Yes, it is.*

MK: In 1964 Hebron was in Jordan – I joined an American archaeological dig and nearly lost my life because the seminarian idiots started speaking Hebrew on the last day. They were not Jewish but were Jewish scholars – Hebrew scholars. They were archaeologists. One of them knew Hava Nagila. He was drunk as a lord and started singing ‘Hava Nagila’. That is another story in itself.

I played squash for Jordan, representing Jordan, because there were two squash courts at the YMCA. If I went to Amman or East Jerusalem, I stayed at the YMCA and saw people playing squash and asked to join in. I could beat them all. Did I tell you this?

Q: *No.*

MK: They were playing a match against the British Royal Airforce and they were worried about their standard and asked me if I would play. I said, “Yes”. It was a big official match with Jordan versus the Royal Airforce. I won my match. I was the only one who won and the captain of the team came up to me and said, “Be careful of that group captain. He’s a spy.” I said, “Wow. How do you know he’s a spy?” He said, “Nobody who is a group captain in the Royal English Airforce can be as dumb as he is; so he must be a spy.”

I worked in a Palestine Refugee Camp of 2500 people. We used to see about 100 children a day. We didn’t see 100 per day but about 100 people a day would turn up and nurses would prioritise them. I worked with a Syrian doctor. He was in Jordan because he didn’t want to be in the Syrian Army. He was a highly civilised person. He had done his undergraduate medical course in France and his post-graduate course in America.

He was a good doctor. But you couldn’t talk about Israel to him. He just frothed at the mouth and went berserk. The other thing was that his uncle had run over a child and the father of the child, thinking the child was dead, had taken out his dagger and killed the uncle. This started a vendetta because the child recovered.

This guy stopped working and all his energy went into organising the vendetta – not to kill the uncle but to kill a member of the family of the uncle. For a period of 6 weeks he didn’t appear. Then all of a sudden I was invited to this big dinner where money changed hands and that was the end of it.

Q: *Was that actually in Syria?*

MK: No, in Jordan. I used to go down to the rose red city.

Q: *In Jordan?*

MK: Yes. Petra. I used to go down there about once a month. A whole seven people lived there in those days. They would kill a sheep. I would pay for the sheep and we would have a slap up meal which left them with so much for at least a week. I had to collect water from the Jordan River as well in four gallon cans. That went back to England where it was put into perfume bottles and was sold at 15 pounds a bottle. It was ‘Holy Water’.

About once every three weeks I would have a weekend off. I would get into a cheroot a taxi that did not leave until it had 5 passengers. We would go through Syria to Lebanon into the mountains where there was snow and down to the Mediterranean where you could swim. I would stay at the American University in

Beirut. I loved Beirut. The smell of Beirut with all the cooking in the street was just wonderful.

In Irbid I saw a case of smallpox which I had never seen before.

If I really needed pathology I would put my specimens in a cheroot and it would go to the American University. They would then put a message in a cheroot to come back to me. One of the most memorable ones was that a lot of people had giardia lamblia, which is a gastro problem. I wondered where it was coming from.

Their water was coming from a well. So I took a specimen of the water and sent it off to the American University. I got a message back which said, "This water is highly infected with giardia and everything else. If you boil it up for 10 minutes you could shave in it and that's about all."

Q: *Can we just digress a little bit? Did you go to Israel from that area?*

MK: Yes.

Q: *What year was that, Max?*

MK: That was the end of 1964.

Q: *How long did you spend in Israel?*

MK: I went through the Mandelbaum Gate, which was a big deal. It took a bit of organising. I had to prove I wasn't Jewish. I had a letter from the Bishop of South Korea which stated that I was a member of the Anglican Church, I had written myself because he wouldn't. I pinched his letterheaded writing paper.

I went through there. You walk all by yourself and then 50 metres later there is an Israeli guard. I said, "I'm Jewish." He said, "Ma ich patli"(What do I care)." So that was the thing. I made my way to the west side of Jerusalem. When I was in East Jerusalem I was very careful when I walked past the Western Wall. I just didn't do anything – I just walked. I didn't take photos or anything.

One of my former girlfriends, Judy Gold, was living in Jerusalem teaching. She had lived in Sydney and I lived in Perth. I stayed there a bit and then found a job on a kibbutz, Kibbutz Hazorea. It was one of the kibbutzim which had been bought by German university students in 1935. It was quite luxurious actually. Have you been there?

Q: Yes.

MK: They had an ulpan sort of thing there. I worked there. They had agriculture and engineering business type things. I worked in the agriculture bit. They had a doctor who had come out with them in 1935.

Q: *I might just stop there to change recordings.*

Q: *We are reconnecting.*

MK: They were most interested in Jordan.

Q: *Hold on. Just before that you did an ulpan? You said you were learning Hebrew on the kibbutz?*

MK: Well, you worked on the kibbutz. They had a very small ulpan in the morning so you did 2 hours of Hebrew.

Q: *Did you learn a bit of Hebrew?*

MK: I started learning a bit of Hebrew but not much. I did learn some Hebrew. It's very difficult to learn in Israel because as soon as you try and speak they speak English back to you. That was it. I gave a talk and virtually the whole kibbutz turned up.

Q: *Was that about Jordan?*

MK: Yes. I had met with King Hussein and all that sort of stuff. They said to me, "We are very broad-minded and you can say what you want to" so I talked and showed slides. I said, "They do have a case, you know" and the place went berserk so they weren't broad-minded at all. People were shouting and screaming and so on.

They had a doctor who came out in 1935 with the original German students and he was now very ill. He actually had cancer of the throat and he was old and frail. I said to him, "While I am here, how about I do all the night calls? There won't be a lot." He rasped. "Yes" and at 2 o'clock on the very first night I was woken up to see a child who had acute tonsillitis. I gave the child an injection of penicillin, which is what we had, and the parents were then to pick up oral penicillin in the morning.

In the morning all hell broke loose. This Germanic old, frail doctor wanted to know what right I had to give a child an injection without his permission. They carried on. I just said, "Look, I am trying to do a good turn" and not only did he turn against me but most of the kibbutz did also, saying I should have woken him up and so on. I said, "I don't want to stay here anymore so I am going. Goodbye."

The two guys who ran the kibbutz chased me to the bus stop. I said, "No, you don't treat people like that" and I left.

I got myself into Ulpan Akiva in Natanya. That was run by a Shulamit who was an Irgun person. There was the thing which Jackie used to describe well. She would stand up and say, "At this ulpan we have people from everywhere" and she would name all these countries but she didn't name Australia. She said, "Did I miss anybody?" I said, "Australia." She then said, "We have people from all professions" and she named them. Then she said, "Is there anyone else?" and I said, "Chicken sexer." Then she said, "And we have people from all religions. Have we missed out on anybody?" I said, "Buddhist."

That's how I met Jackie. Her first impression was "how exotic". I was the bottom of the class and Jackie was the top of the class and the teacher put us together in the hope that she would teach me.

Q: *I was going to ask you how you met Jackie. That was one of the questions I was going to ask, how you met. That was beautiful. Was that in 1970?*

MK: No early in 1965.

First of all, I had been at Masada. They were looking for a doctor so I put my hand up. That was an interesting memory. At Masada I met Yigal Yadin. He had been the leader of the Hagana. An Israeli hero. He was a professor of Archaeology Israel and he was the boss of the excavation. Then there were a whole crowd of archaeologists who regard themselves as much better archaeologists than he was.

He had an air of authority. I have rarely seen anything like that. You had to be at the top of Masada by 6.10 am. The digging started at 6.10. There were a lot of volunteers who came from England because The Sunday Advertiser was subsidising their travel. They might have been a leading endocrinologist but he would just look at them and they would run up the steps.

There wasn't enough water. It was hot and dry. The only water everyone was given was one pint, in an ex-army type bottle. It wasn't enough. I had only been there a few days when my first encounter was a chap called Gideon Goldstein. He was the head pilot of El Al. He was a war hero. He was a Bronx boy, close to being a gangster. At the start of WW2, the US recruiters put him in the air force and taught him how to fly.

After Israeli independence he decided to go to Israel. He bought an aeroplane and flew right over and became the fifth aeroplane in the air force. They used to throw hand grenades out of the window. Actually they didn't have a window; it was an open cockpit. He was the first one who got kidney stones. He was in a bad way so I put him in the ambulance and drove him to Beersheva.

I had a big argument in Beersheva as to what was wrong with him. They said, "He's got appendicitis." I said, "He's got kidney stones. You don't get blood in your urine when you have appendicitis." When I came back all hell broke loose. Yigael Yadin was screaming at me because there were two rules. One of them was that you had to be at the top of Masada at 6.10 and the other one was that you were not allowed to leave the parameter of the camp and I had done that. We had this big argument.

I have never been frightened of people in authority.– you know, the consultants in hospitals who used to bully people. I used to laugh at them. So I said, "I'm leaving. Goodbye." This meant the end of the dig. They had had a death the day before I came. They actually had a death.

Q: *Due to?*

MK: It was a young English bloke. They had a flying fox and he decided to go down in the flying fox and fell out. They were very jittery about all of this. There was a Dutch lady there on the committee. I think someone in Holland was giving money to the dig. She acted as a peace maker. I decided that I would stay and they declared that I had to be on the organising committee.

I met all his mates – Moishe Dayan and all those people. I finished up getting on extremely well with him, Yigael Yadin. Somewhere – and I can't find it – he wrote me a letter thanking me for my services. It was addressed to "An Australian Digger."

Q: *That's funny.*

MK: I met a lot of people who were setting up the Hebrew Museum, so that was interesting.

Q: *It was an exciting time. Was this before or after you had met Jackie?*

MK: This was before. After that and after the ulpan, I got a job in Meir Hospital in Kfar Saba. Because I lacked the language and I could give anaesthetics, that's what I was doing. Kfar Saba Hospital had about 400 beds at that time. It's much bigger now. It had doctors from everywhere. Some of the doctors, particularly from Romania, were just horrible, hopeless and they were surgeons.

I used to admire the operating theatre. There were so many people and they were all telling each other what to do. I wrote back to my father in Hebrew but it took a long time to write the letters. I just said that it was hard to know who was who. You could tell who the surgeon was: that was the person who had the scalpel. The janitor was the person telling him what to do.

The doctors then went on strike in Israel. All of the doctors. Apparently a lot of the doctors were getting physically attacked by their patients, which I wasn't surprised about because the way they talked to patients and dealt with them was just awful. It was one of the reasons I didn't stay in Israel. I think if I had been a consultant, if I had had the requisite qualifications at the time, it's likely I might have stayed.

The other thing which worried me was that I might not truly understand what was going on because of my language problem. I lived in the nurses' lecture theatre.

Q: *At the hospital?*

MK: Yes, at the hospital. I had to be gone by 6 am and the toilets were never working because there were about 70 nurses who used the lecture theatre. I went to the menachel (the Manager) and said, "There are empty flats and I want one of them." He said, "It's only for married people." He said, "If you get married, you can have one."

When the strike was on, I didn't go on strike. The menachel, who was a retired surgeon, and I didn't strike. He decided he wasn't going to pay any of the doctors – and that included me – so I said to him, "Well, how am I going to live?" He said, "You have a girlfriend. She has a good job. Where does she work?" I said, "She works for Steimatzky's Bookshops." "Oh," he said, "she has no money at all!" Steimatzky had a very bad name in his frugality and treatment of staff.

Steimatzky was also not a good employer for women. Jackie and I were offered a job very early on as spies. On the day they hung Eli Cohen in Damascus we were called to Dizengoff Street. On previous occasions the letter arrived after the time of the appointment, so I took no notice of it. Then a car came and took me away. There were two guys from the spy agency. They spoke Turkish and French. We had to go back to Natanya and get Jackie. Jackie's English wasn't all that great.

They decided that we should get married and that I should go back to Jordan as a spy. The front page of the newspaper on that day was about Eli Cohen. Do you know him?

Q: Yes.

MK: Well, he was being hung. There he was. I just didn't feel I should use the Save the Children Fund for that. Also, Jackie wasn't good at keeping secrets. That was the story. I did meet one of my father's cousins, who was a Kamien. He had gone to Israel as a very young man. He ran a post office there. He had a wife but no children. He seemed to be a very nice guy. So that was the end of that.

Q: *How long was it before you left Israel?*

MK: I left Israel at the end of 1965 and went to London. I had great difficulty getting a job. I applied for 63 jobs and got one interview. I didn't get that job. The chap who invited me to apply for the job was an endocrinologist who had been at

Masada. He was very embarrassed that I didn't get the job. I was completing against three Sri Lankan doctors and it was very unusual for an Australian doctor not to get the job.

He was embarrassed but said he was the junior consultant and the senior consultant didn't want me. As I left, I went past the senior consultant's office and asked the secretary if I could see him for a few minutes. She went inside and said "No." I just walked in and said, "I am a fellow doctor and am in a lot of strife and you can afford to give me 3 minutes of your time."

He said, "You are unstable, completely unstable. You work here, there and everywhere. If we give you a job, 2 days later you will be off to Vietnam." I said, "That's pretty unfair because I have completed every contract I have ever undertaken." He said, "Well, that's it; you are not getting a job." I left but I understood why I didn't get a job.

The culture of British medicine was that anybody who wasn't aspiring to be a hospital consultant had fallen off the ladder of promotion. This was Churchill's doctor, called Corkscrew Charlie – that is what he was known as – and he was the Dean of St Mary's Hospital. I could see the problem.

I did apply for a job at Guy's Hospital in child psychiatry.

Q: *I think we actually covered that, or I have read that. At this stage, were you married?*

MK: We had just got married. After I got the job, we got married.

Q: *So Jackie came with you to England from Israel?*

MK: No, she had gone back to France.

Q: *Where did you get married?*

MK: We married twice. The first time we got married in the Elephant and Castle Registry Office in the UK. We had our reception in a Chinese restaurant in Willesden and there were 12 of us. My cousin from Melbourne, Joey Kay, happened to be in London; my roommate in Adelaide came from Singapore; Mashie Levi and his wife, Melanie, Tim Welborn – I don't know if you know him; he's a doctor here

We went there because it was fairly cheap and we had the set meal. It was a seven course set meal. It was just brilliant and it was five shillings per person. It started off with Peking Duck. I said, "Could I give my compliments to the chef?" . They didn't quite know what that was but anyway they went and got the chef. The chef came out, looked at Richard Yung, fell into each other's arms. They had been in primary school in Beijing together.

Q: *How crazy?*

MK: Richard Yung was studying to be an obstetrician in London and this guy had been the head chef at the Chinese Embassy but had run away. Then, of course, we married with a Jewish religious marriage in Lille. We then came back. I enjoyed that job very much.

Q: *You did a psychiatry job in England?*

MK: I did 8 months of child psychiatry at Guy's Hospital. One of my bosses was Anna Freud. It was a very good job because I enjoyed it and learned a lot. I also

learned that I was a much better doctor than all the English guys who had come from Oxford and Cambridge because I had a bit of go in me and they didn't.

There was one incident with a little boy who had a dog phobia. They got to the stage of desensitisation. They needed to get a real dog. They had been debating about how to get a dog for 10 days.

I just went downstairs and there was a lady walking a chihuahua which I thought was an appropriate dog. I explained the situation to her and she said, "Yes, you can take the dog." She gave me her address. My boss waxed eloquent about how this boy from the colonies could get a dog when they couldn't get a dog. I took the dog into the young man with the dog phobia and he jumped out of the window and broke his ankle. I was now persona non grata there!

Q: *Imagine if you had brought in a great dane!*

MK: I then applied for a registrar's job. This was a beginning job. I didn't get it. My boss took me aside and told me that my interview technique was execrable. I didn't know the word. I thought it had something to do with excreta. He said, "I am trying to help you but you have false modesty and are contradicting me. For instance I say you speak Japanese. You say "only a few words. I say you were speaking to the visiting Japanese

"Well, I don't really speak Japanese; just a few words." "But you were talking to the Japanese psychiatrist who was visiting." I said, "Yes, but he wasn't replying to me because I was addressing him in the impolite form."

After that, I asked him what he was going to do with his life because he was quite young and I couldn't see him staying at Guy's Hospital forever. Although he was a consultant, the boss man was the Queen's psychiatrist and he was quite outshone by this boss man. He told me he wanted to be a member of the House of Lords. I had never heard of that as an ambition before. He told me how you become a member of the House of Lords.

He never became a member of the House of Lords but he was knighted and became the Minister of State for Health. He fell out with Margaret Thatcher over tobacco. He wanted to introduce laws to make smoking much more difficult. Maggie Thatcher's husband was an executive in the tobacco industry. She told my boss to shut up. To get a seat in the house of Lords he had to be the Minister for Health for 7 years. Four years was not enough.

Q: *Can we now divert a little bit? When did you come back to Australia with Jackie?*

MK: Can I just go on with the next job?

Q: *If that's not covered already in your interviews before?*

MK: I told you about the Jewish psychiatrist who was speaking Yiddish to us all the time?

Q: *No. Tell us about that.*

MK: The next job I got was at the Midland Nerve Hospital in Birmingham. That was a mixture of psychiatry and neurology. I was a senior house officer which entitled you to accommodation there. One of my bosses was a chap called Myer Sim, a Litvak. He adopted us. He had no children. It became embarrassing as he would invite us at least once a week for dinner, sometimes more. He would speak Yiddish. He was fluent, Jackie was fluent. I can understand Yiddish and speak a few words of Yiddish but his wife couldn't understand a single word.

He would go on with Yiddish songs and Yiddish poems. It was terrible because the wife was a non-person there. It was just getting too much so after I had been there for 6 months I wrote a letter to the Professor of Psychiatry asking if he had a registrar's job.

A couple of weeks later when I walked in he said, "Myer Sim is driving you nuts, is he?" I said, "Yes." He said, "When do you want to start?" I said I could start in a month after I had given notice. I said, "Aren't you going to interview me?" He said, "No." I said, "You are a clairvoyant?" He said, "All good psychiatrists are clairvoyant."

He pushed a telegram across. The telegram was from Eric Saint in Perth who was a Professor of Medicine. Trethowan had been the Professor of Psychiatry in Sydney. They knew each other. The letter simply said, "Take him. He thinks different. You'll enjoy it."

Q: *That's amazing.*

MK: That was a wonderful job. There was one occasion when Trethowan was cyclothymic. He was up and down. One day he was really down and he and I were at a party and he was drinking heavily and I was not drinking as much as he did but more than I usually drink. I got a bit woozy. Jackie came in. She hates drunks so she hit me. I said, "Don't hit him." He was big. He thought it was great fun. He had made up his mind that I should be a Professor of Psychiatry.

Q: *When did you come back to Australia?*

MK: I came back to Australia at the end of 1969. Before that I had 2 years at the Warwick Hospital, South Warwickshire Group at Stratford-on-Avon, Leamington Spa. It's a beautiful part of the world. It was the best hospital I have ever been in. I got the job by chance.

I used to do all the psychiatric liaison work at the hospital. If I felt I was out of my depth I would call Trethowan and I would watch him. It was a good way to learn.

On November 1, 1967, I was called to the Department of Medicine by Professor Sir William Melville Arnott. A young non-English speaking Frenchman had locked himself in the toilet and, as Jackie told us, was shouting "Je suis jeune pour mourir" (I am too young to die). I called Jackie. She came to the hospital. And diagnosed the problem immediately. It was the chrysanthemums. The Queen Elizabeth Hospital recycled flowers from funerals. The young man had two vases of chrysanthemums in his room. This is a sign of death to the French, especially on All Saints Day. Jackie removed the flowers, told the patient it was a mistake and he came out of the toilet.

Arnott, who had no time for psychiatry, was impressed. He asked me, "Are you going to be an A class bloody fool or a B class bloody fool?" which Trethowan translated for me as "Are you going to be a psychiatrist who is also a member of the Royal College of Physicians or are you going to just have just a Diploma of Psychiatric Medicine?" , which was then the specialist psychiatric qualification (The UK College of Psychiatrists was not formed until 1971).

At 9pm on Christmas Eve 1967, I received a phone call from "Whittaker of Warwick". He said: "I have a registrar from the colonies who has gone bonkers. I wanted Trethowan to come and see him because he understands the Australian

mind. But he is in Norway. I understand that you too understand the Australian mind."

It was a sliding door moment. I was about to say something flippant, but I didn't. Had I done so, the rest of my life would have been very different. Instead, I got in my car and drove the 85 kms to the Warwick Hospital. Present were 17 people in immaculate starched white coats, consultants, registrars, medical students, everyone. I listened to the story again and when Whittaker paused for breath I said, "Could I go and see him?" He said, "Yes."

At this stage a Swat Squad appeared. There were four guys armed to the teeth. They shoot first and ask questions later. I asked, "Could I have 10 minutes by myself?" Whittaker said, "How brave." I knocked on the door and said, "G'day mate. I'm from Perth." This medical registrar was from Townsville and was having marital problems. I took him to Birmingham and admitted him to the Psychiatric ward.

Whittaker rings on Christmas Day and says, "I was very impressed with the way you handled that emergency. I have checked you out and I hear you are looking for a medical registrar's job." I said, "Yes." He said, "Well, you can have his job." I said, "That would be completely unethical." He said, "Quite correct" and he put the phone down.

Q: *Max, we are going to stop there because we will stay in England for the next hour!*

MK: No, you'll finish in 2 seconds.

Q: *And get to Australia?*

MK: Yes. There were 332 people who applied for the job and I got the job. It was the best job in England because it had a high rate of passing the Royal College of Physicians exam, which I did. It's the only exam I have ever topped. I then came back here.

Q: *Very good. You then came back to Perth?*

MK: I came back to Perth. We had a big family welcome home dinner and I started to shake and I knew it was malaria. A week later I did a month locum for Salec Minc at Fremantle Hospital. And then we went to Sydney.

I was employed by the New South Wales Institute of Psychiatry, with an office at the Prince Henry Hospital. Jackie stayed in a rented house in Double Bay while off I went to Bourke. I only went there for a very short periods of time, until she had Tamara. When Tamara was a month old, we went to live in Bourke.

Q: *Tamara is your first child?*

MK: Yes. Tamara was a bit hyperactive and because it was hot and there was a swimming pool and a kiddies' pool, Tamara could actually swim before she could walk. At 18 months old she disappeared. We had a big barbecue on the river bank with many Aboriginal people and she disappeared. There was a panic. She was immediately tracked into the river. There she was on the other side of the river, 80 metres away. She was a little person, 18 months old. Everyone was going to rescue her but I said no. I swam across and then swam back with her.

Q: *We might fast forward again. When did you return to Perth?*

MK: I returned to Perth in 1973.

Q: *Had you had your second child by then?*

MK: No. Jackie was pregnant, yes.

Q: *Your second child is Benjamin?*

MK: Daniel.

Q: *When was he born?*

MK: Daniel was born at the end of 1973.

Q: *Tamara was born when?*

MK: She was born in May 1970.

Q: *The last child was Benjamin?*

MK: Yes.

Q: *When was he born?*

MK: Towards the end of 1975.

Q: *When you came back to Perth – I know you were an incredibly busy person juggling a lot of balls I am sure – did you get involved in any Jewish organisations?*

MK: Yes. I got involved in the tennis club, the Jewish doctors' association, the shule. I was a member of the shule.

Q: *You attended the tennis club but you had no special role in the Jewish Maccabi Tennis Club?*

MK: No.

Q: *But you would attend?*

MK: I had been a member of Maccabi clubs when I was younger and when I was a medical student in Adelaide I represented Maccabi in a small group from Adelaide. We won our first ever medal or whatever you win in the swimming. It was highly controversial because it all rested on the relay race, the 4 by 50 metre relay race, but we had only three people. They agreed that the first person could also swim last. Since he was in the Australian Olympic Swimming Squad, we won. To this day, when I meet any Melbournians from then, they always say we cheated.

Q: *That's gorgeous. When you were younger did you go to any Maccabi carnivals?*

MK: Yes. I went to carnivals when I was 16 and I went to one when I was 18. I think the one when I was 18 was in Perth. I played everything virtually – mainly tennis, swimming. I even went running once. I also played table tennis.

Q: *Let me just go back. You were a member of the tennis club, you were with the Jewish doctors. Did you have a role or just attend?*

MK: I would attend. I had a real thing about Jewish organisations. I still have. For some reason or other, people can't organise them. There is just not – I mean, the Jewish Doctors' Society, the guy who ran it, invariably the slide machine would break down or he didn't have it or it would start late. There were arguments at the tennis club all the time. If it was to start at 2.30, it didn't start

until 3.30 and there were no balls. It just sort of became part of an expected disorganisation.

In recent years I used to give talks to the Jewish Men in Retirement. If I was going to show slides, I could bet that the projector wouldn't work. In the later years things started to get better.

Q: *The other one you talked about was that you became a member of the Perth Hebrew Congregation. You said you joined the shule?*

MK: Yes. I did bar mitzvah and was a member after that. When I was away, I am not sure what it was but when I came back I became a member.

Q: *Were you active in the shule at all?*

MK: No.

Q: *Did you go to shule for the high holydays?*

MK: Yes, for some of the things I would go. I would always go to Kol Nidre or Simcha Torah.

Q: *So not a lot.*

MK: Jackie, who was very Jewish – I mean, she was steeped in Judaism but agnostic – didn't like the shule. She just didn't. It was unusual for her not to like something. She just took a view. She didn't speak about it much but when she did speak about it, the people she was with, she said she felt unwelcome.

She stopped going to shule and stopped paying her dues. She prevailed upon me to do the same. Since I wasn't going very much – I mean, I was just going to Kol Nidre after a while – I dropped out. That was only for a few months as I felt I should come back.

Q: *Was that the new synagogue in Plantation Street?*

MK: Yes.

Q: *Would you have a family seder?*

MK: Yes.

Q: *With your children?*

MK: Yes, and it was usually run by Ralph Stanton my brother in law. There was always a proper seder.

Q: *Did your children go to Carmel School?*

MK: No.

Q: *At that time the high school at Carmel was established?*

MK: I don't think it was established then. I'm pretty sure it wasn't.

Q: *The high school?*

MK: When was the high school established?

Q: *I am just trying to think. My cousin, who is 60 – how old is Tamara?*

MK: 56.

Q: *My cousin was in the high school. Your children didn't go to either the primary school or the high school?*

MK: No. They went to primary school in our suburb. They used to walk there.

Q: *Was that decision made because it was too far away or you were not keen on a Jewish day school for your children?*

MK: I don't think I gave the Jewish day school much thought at that time. We moved into here in City Beach and Kapinara School is about 1 kilometre. The kids used to walk there. Tamara was walking there from about the age of 6 and then she would take the others.

I remember that Daniel, before his bar mitzvah, was going to the Sunday school, which is still going. I was throwing stuff out the other day and found a letter saying, "Can I stop going to Sunday school please?" He didn't like it like I didn't like it. He did his bar mitzvah in Israel and Benjamin did it here.

Q: *Did Benjamin go to the Sunday school as well here?*

MK: I don't think he did. Benjamin is very bright and he could sort of do things without much effort.

Q: *Obviously they were raised in a very Jewish home?*

MK: A Yiddish home.

Q: *Do they do much to be involved in any Jewish activities?*

MK: Nothing.

Q: *And Tamara?*

MK: Yes, it's obvious.

Q: *And the boys, no?*

MK: Tamara is married to Opher Yom-tov so they have a wonderful seder. It's a huge seder with 20 or 30 people.

Q: *Where do they live?*

MK: In Sydney.

Q: *Your two sons have no real interest in the Jewish community?*

MK: Benjamin has but Daniel no. Daniel was born on 28 December and he was small, and the youngest kid in his class. He went to Hale School because that was close. It was a bad fit for him. He did not find a place in any regular sports but went surfing with a friend who left school and joined the army. When he left the army he became a builder and he and Daniel started buying land and building commercial projects on it and then selling it. That way he has been the person who has kept the finances of the family going.

Q: *Tamara married in Perth to a Perth boy?*

MK: Yes.

Q: *When did they go to Sydney?*

MK: She married Opher Yom-tov here. They stayed here for a while. Opher, when he was an engineering student, got a scholarship to go and work in Palo Alto for IDEO. This is an innovative engineering business set up by a professor of engineering at Stanford University. It's the sort of place that you go if have a problem with something and want an innovating answer— it might be tamper-

proof bottles to stop kids getting into drugs or a shopping cart or whatever – you could go there and they would set up a work group.

I sat in on one work group there. It was for a shopping trolley. Opher was the lead member. They are all equal and they are all nerds. You can see they are nerds because there are 80 of them and they all have their own bicycles designed and built by them which are on a cantilevered hook device that hang above their desks. Opher was deemed to have good interpersonal skills.

Q: *Which is unusual for a nerd?*

MK: They had a lady who was a shopper. They had just recruited her from a shopping mall. They had an engineering person, and so it went on. They would just do these things. They would charge a lot of money for it – usually something like a million dollars. Occasionally they would do work for free, like inventing stoves for rural Kenyan people.

They sent him off to China for 5 years to set up a branch of IDEO. It was not very successful because in those days the boss's word is what you went on. The idea of brainstorming was culturally not there. They came back and got various jobs in banks as a guy with innovative ideas.

I was doctoring up in the Aboriginal Medical Service in the Kimberleys in 2018 and I was off country. Some 10 very well-dressed people came walking up to the 8 house, Aboriginal settlement. I said to the nurse who was with us, "Who are they?" She said, "I have no idea."

They were CEOs of high-profile businesses and they were working out ways they could employ some Aboriginal people. One of the guys was Brian Hartzler, the boss of Westpac Bank. I said to him, "This is a free clinic so you can come." He said, "Well, I drink too much."

I asked him what he was doing there and he told me. I said, "Have you come across Opher Yom-tov?" He said, "Oh, he's in the next office to me. He just won a big international prize for innovation." I said, "Did you give him a bonus?" "Oh", he said, "I didn't." I said, "You should think about it." Three days later I get an email from Opher saying, "Your chance meeting with my boss has resulted in a \$50,000 bonus."

Q: *Oh, my goodness.*

MK: That's where they are.

Q: *How many children do Tamara and Opher have, Max?*

MK: They have two children. Daniel who has two.

Q: *Tamara has two and Daniel has two? And Benjamin?*

MK: Two.

Q: *How old are Tamara's kids?*

MK: One of them just turned 21 and the other one will be 18 in August.

Q: *Are they religious?*

MK: No.

Q: *Very Jewish?*

MK: They know they are Jews but they don't go to synagogue. The youngest one was home schooled. Tamara managed to do that very well as well as holding down a part-time job.

Q: *What did she do when she was studying?*

MK: She did anthropology. She got a job with Justice French because he was the land rights commissioner. She also flew an aeroplane and did parachute jumps and all that sort of stuff. She realised that in order to work with Aboriginal land rights she really needed to be a lawyer so she went to Murdoch University.

She and Opher moved to Melbourne There she worked at Arnold, Bloch and Leibler in the Aboriginal section.

She could have had a stellar career I suppose because Robert French became the Chief Justice of the High Court of Australia. He thought very highly of her. She was very conscientious. She also has real and genuine people skills.

She was working for Arnold Bloch and Leibler that had a section of four lawyers doing pro bono work for Aboriginal land rights claims. She goes by the name Tamara Kamien. On at least one occasion it helped engender trust when the negotiations were getting shaky.

Q: *Her children?*

Noah the eldest, was wedded to his mobile phone. His school provided the opportunity to spend 3 weeks at NASA. He came back a totally different human being.

He is now at the NSW University of Technology doing electronic and mechanical engineering. He has a hobby with old watches. He works three half days a week at a vintage watch place in Sydney with older people. He is their disciple and successor.

Q: *That's gorgeous.*

MK: When Noah left school Asher refused to go, so he was home schooled. He is very knowledgeable. He is now going to TAFE. He is very interested in food and cooking. And of all the grandchildren, the only one interested in his family history.

Last year (2025), we all went back to Bourke because it was the 50th anniversary of the new hospital. The Director of Nursing threatened me that if I didn't come, she was going to come to Perth and cut my balls off!

Asher came. He wanted to meet some real Aborigines and there is a real Aborigine in Dubbo who lives on the riverbank. He is called Riverbank Frank. He is quite well known. He has had great articles written about him in The Australian. We all went to a pub, had dinner and then went back to his camp. Asher wanted a real Aboriginal experience. So, Riverbank Frank started a gidgie woodfire and there was a lot of smoke. Asher went through the smoke for half an hour and came out and said, "Now I am a proper man."

Q: *Max can you tell me a little about your 2 sons and their family?*

Daniel married Katie Ogden. They have 2 children. Amos (12) and Hannah (11). Daniel is a zoologist who has wintered in Antarctica studying Elephant seals. He was also a 2 year Australian Youth Volunteer in sustainable ecology in New guinea.

Benjamin married Akiko Hayashi. Their children Coco (18) Kenji (13). Benjamin is a paediatrician and Clinical Geneticist.

Q: *Tell me, Max, since you retired have you got involved in any Jewish organisations?*

MK: As I said, I was going to the Men in Retirement but more as a speaker than as a participant. I occasionally did go there. I met some old friends when I did. I also became quite friendly with Rabbi Freilich. I am a member of the Maurice Zeffert Home, The Holocaust Museum and the West Australian Jewish History Society. I also write the occasional biographies of Jews who have lived or died in the New South Wales outback. I am the go-to resource for several hundred gentiles who Jackie and I have befriended.

Q: *I think that you mentioned to me that you used to go to some of the shiurim, talks, done by Rabbi Freilich. Is that right?*

MK: No, I didn't. I had him as a patient and so we became friendly. I went to his place for shabbat a couple of times. I just found him to be a very empathetic type of human being. I went to some ecumenical things. For example, I went to the East Perth Cemetery and he was there. He was belting out Christian songs with great gusto. He went to a high school whose name I can't remember –? Forte Street, but he knew all of these hymns. He mixed well with all the other clergy who were there.

A lot of my friends were Jewish. The other day I was out with an anthropologist who has decided to rediscover his Judaism so we off to lunch at Kings Park. We had a 3-hour lunch. He was saying that he found something was returning to him in the sense of when he spoke to Jewish people. I said, "Well, we have been together for 3 hours and we click, and we click because we are Jewish."

Q: *Exactly. I think that happens more and more as you are getting older. I certainly feel it much more now than I did before. I think you are just so busy with life when you are younger but, as you get older, that connection is so important. I agree with you entirely.*

MK: I did the passage in Alaska with Jackie and very quickly there were 100 people on the boat and within hours - - -

Q: *You discovered the Jewish people!*

MK: We had both congregated to the Jewish people. Interestingly enough, one of them said to me, "I have a very good friend in New York who is Max Kamen. Would that be the same?" I said, "Well, actually I have met Max Kamen. It probably is the same."

I might have told you that I was walking through Broadway and 43th Street with Jackie and there was a big notice which said, "Max Kamen, Attorney and Physician." We went inside and it was full of African Americans. I said, "I think this guy must be related." When he had finished and came out, he was the spitting image of Abe Kamien, my father's brother – spitting image. He also has family who had come to Ellis Island at the same time as my family.

He rang his brother, Martin He said, "Martin come to dinner. I have another person here." Martin said, "No." He said, "We will make you kreplach." He said, "Yes." This guy turned up. The first thing he said to me was "I should have won the Nobel Prize, you know." He was nominated many times. He was a member

of the Los Alamos Project. He was a Professor of Physics and a professional viola player. After Los Alamos he was declared to be a Communist by Senator McCarthy That buggered up his whole life and career.

Q: *How is he connected to you – through your father?*

MK: We don't know and they spell the name K-a-m-e-n.

Q: *But you will take them as family! Before I forget, did you partner a debutante?*

MK: No.

Q: *Were you asked?*

MK: I was.

Q: *And you refused?*

MK: I found out you had to wear white gloves and the refusal stayed with me for a long, long time. When Florrie Levy died, I wrote a letter of obituary and it was picked up by her companion, who was also a psychiatrist. She wrote to me. It was very interesting. She said, "I don't think you need to feel guilty. Florrie never mentioned it to me."

Florrie was a year behind me at Modern School. I think she was dux at Modern School. She did anaesthetics and became an Associate Professor of Anaesthesia. She got bored with it and went off and did child psychiatry. She became a professor of child psychiatry. She became a world authority in child psychiatry. She obviously was a very, very bright Lady.

Q: *When I was thinking of the questions I wanted to ask you, I thought, "Debutante, yes, but I can't imagine you being a partner to a debutante, given your free spirit." I wouldn't have thought it would be your kind of thing.*

MK: I have never been a good dresser. My mother used to despair of me.

Q: *I am sure she was very well dressed.*

MK: I do remember when my father was in Melbourne and the Jewish ball was on. My mother liked dancing. This was my last year at school. I went and hired a dinner suit. I had the first dance with my mother and she noticed I had yellow socks on. I was sent home to get black socks and I did return.

Q: *One last area I would like to discuss, your father had a brother who was Abe Kamien. He and his wife had how many children?*

MK: His wife, Elka, was a Berinshan and they had one child who married Joe Gold.

Q: *Barbara Gold.*

MK: She was Barbara Kamien and was always good at mathematics. I asked her the other day about our grandparents. She said she didn't have a lot to do with them. They seemed to 'favouritise' me (MaxK). Abe was 10 years younger than my father.

When I was looking this up I found photos of two plaques about Abe. I saw them and I didn't copy them. When I went back to copy them they had gone and I can't find them. They were from his army service.

He was in the army and became a corporal in an artillery regiment. He damaged his right hand and did not go overseas.

After 4 years of army service Abe came back and worked with my father. He branched out on his own. He did well in real estate and in his and Elka's shop Cameo-Loretta.

Q: *You didn't combine the families for anything? You didn't have big family gatherings.*

MK: No. I don't remember seders. I don't ever remember going to family seders. We used to go to the Princes Hall seder. Abe didn't spend a lot of time visiting or vice versa. When I came back to Perth I became Elka's doctor of last resort I got on very well with Abe and Elka and now with Barbara and Joe Gold.

Q: *Max, this has been an incredible journey that you have taken me on. I would like to thank you very much. If later on there is anything you can remember you can always add it to what we have already put together. That was fabulous. Thank you very much.*

Q: *(Late addition). Max can you please repeat what you just told me after we stopped recording? This was about your experience on the board of the Maurice Zeffert Home.*

MK: I can't tell you the exact date. I will be able to but I can't remember the exact date. There was a Jewish lady historian and her husband was the chairman.

Q: *Sue Levy? And Julian Levy.*

MK: Yes. He was the chairman.

Q: *I think he was the president.*

MK: The vice president died fairly recently.

Q: *Phil Samuell.*

MK: Yes. They didn't like each other and they vied for the presidency. Sometimes Phil was the president and sometimes Julian Levy. I started there by being Jackie's mum's doctor and I had a couple of other patients. Mine were the only ones who were not on, the tranquilizer risperidone. I would visit and the first question they would ask me was "Can we put her on risperidone" and I said, "No, she doesn't need risperidone." One day I went there and she was tied up to a chair. I said, "Okay, you can put her on risperidone."

The whole idea was to damp people down. While I was there they had a CEO who had been there for 20 + years. Phil asked me to be on the board. Whenever I put up anything, the CEO would say, "That's not a policy matter; that's a matter for me" and I just couldn't get any change whatsoever.

My aim was to improve the nursing care. The care wasn't bad but people were left on their own for very long periods of time. I couldn't get anything through whatsoever – nothing. They had a treasurer who had been there for 10 years. He was leaving. I said to the president, Julien Levy, "I think we should have a farewell party." He said, "What for?" There was no habit of thanking people in a proper manner.

I then resigned because we were not insured. They wanted to build this eight storey building for \$8 million and this was going to get them out of financial trouble. They had two benefactors who died within two weeks of each other and

they hadn't left anything in their wills but they used to give a million dollars between them every year. This put them into financial difficulty so I resigned.

Five months later I went to the annual general meeting, which was huge, and they kicked out the existing council and the 20 year CEO resigned on the spot.

Q: *Did you go back on the board?*

MK: No. I am not a joiner and I hate boards. I really hate them. Occasionally I have been on boards where the chairman has been good. I was on the board of the AMA for a while representing the medical school. Bars Stokes was the chairman and the votes were close. We then got another chairman and the vote became 11:1.

I went to the loo one meeting and the president came up and said, "No communists on the AMA". Keith Shilkin was the vice president and he came up on the other side and he said, "We want you to stay on the chiropractic committee." I said, "But they never meet." Keith said, "Exactly."

I used to enjoy the meetings at Claremont General Practice because Dr Tunbridge hated meetings too and so we made him the chair of the meetings. He would send out the agenda. If you agreed you put a tick and if you didn't agree then it was on the agenda. We might only have 12 items and we'd only discuss two. He would make it quite clear that the meeting was not to go on for longer than 15 minutes. I liked that. These other Jewish meetings went on forever.

Q: *Now that we are doing another recording, I mentioned before when we were not recording that I didn't ask you to tell me when Jackie died. If you are happy to please talk about when Jackie passed away?*

MK: She passed on 23 September 2023.

Q: *It was very sudden and very shocking?*

MK: Unexpected. Her great fear was dementia. Her mother was an amazing person who survived occupied France. She was a very intelligent person. She left school at 12 and the teachers were very sorry but that was it.

Q: *Jackie was also highly intelligent.*

MK: Yes, Jackie was highly emotionally intelligent as well.

Q: *That's a gift.*

MK: Her ability to pick up a language was just amazing. I mean, after 2 months in Israel she went to work for Steimatzky's Bookshop. In Perth Jackie used to run the foreign language bookshop in William Street. She said they had books in 66 languages. She learned to identify each of the languages. If you had a quiz, she would have been able to win the quiz.

She had a lot of friends around here who used to meet every Wednesday. I go once a month. A lot of people in the street go.

Q: *She was a lovely, lovely person.*

MK: That was where it is. If I was to have my life over again, I would do her the courtesy of trying to learn French beyond being able to belt out the stirring La Marseillaise.

Postscript

The information below was not given during the interviews.

Max provided this latest addition in an email that he sent to Jan Walters 2/08/2026 following a talk that he did for the JHGS WA.

Max wrote.

I omitted medical conferences and one consultancy at Ben Gurion University, School of Medicine, and how the University of Malaysia withdrew an invitation to be their visiting Professor because they did not recognise Israel.

My 49-year membership of a small group of doctors chasing Nazi academics and criminals and their teaching specimens and books.

When I was a medical student in Adelaide, I developed an interest in medical history and medical ethics. When I returned to Perth, I became the editor of the medical students magazine 'The Reflex.' (Sonny Gubbay was the first editor) I commissioned a pathologist, Jack Little, to write about the Nazi doctors. He wrote an article 'Doctors under a dictatorship' which pointed out that most of the doctors in concentration camps who were experimenting on humans e.g. Mengele, were in fact hoping for an academic career in German and Austrian universities. Mengele was writing his "habilitation" a post PhD thesis which guaranteed an academic position in Germany or Austria.

I had also become aware of the Pernkopf Anatomy atlases and wrote a forward, to be put in each of the Atlases pointing out that the specimens used were probably concentration camp victims and people killed because they did not support Nazi ideology.

I then wrote an article about one of my physiology teachers in Adelaide. He was a refugee from the Austrian Nazis. His full title was Dr, Dr, Dr, Dr Count Franz Lippay. My question was how did a Jewish doctor become a Count?

My only sabbatical was in 1980 at McMaster University in Hamilton, Ontario. Adeera Levin (Malcolm's sister) was a student and his father, Sol, was a professor of Psychiatry. The university had a professor of medical history. He ran a course in which I enrolled. I turned out to be his only student. So, we agreed to dine together every Monday evening.

He asked me to talk about Lippay at one of his lectures. One of the audience stood and said he recognised the name Lippay in some association with Theodore Herzl.

I went to his house where he confirmed his memory of the association in a copy of Herzl's diary.

His name was Bill Seidelman. We clicked.

Bill came to Perth for 3 months as a visiting professor in 1980. He and his wife charmed Prof Dick Joske, the Dean and gave several talks attended by many of the Jewish community. I recall a write up in the Maccabean.

We have been colleagues since that time.

Bill and his family made Aliyah 20 years ago. One daughter plays flute in the Israeli Orchestra. The youngest daughter is a professor of Jewish Studies at the University of Oklahoma. Her special interest is small Jewish communities. I was able to introduce her to the Jews of Mauritius.

Sadly, Bill is on his last legs. For the last 20 years he has been saying that Netanyahu is dicing with their lives.

The Lancet has run a Festschrift of his work. There is a good summary of his work in ChatGPT. My role was being a confidant, adding a bit here and there and following up leads in Australia.

I joined UWA in 1973. I tried to introduce discussion of medical ethics. Then I compromised to a short course on 'Nazi Medicine'. The Science Faculty was appreciative. The Medical Faculty maintained the curriculum was already too over-crowded.

I think Peter Winterton has been given an hour or two to try to inform medical students of the greatest breach of Hippocratic medicine in the last 2000 years.

The Palestinian Refugee Camp in Irbid where, at 6.30 am each day 2500 people including 2 year old children would congregate and with hand on heart shout in Arabic "Death to the Jews."

2012 on an Arctic adventure ship where 50 of the 60 passengers were Germans. They objected to having an Australian doctor given the way Mr Howard had demonised and mistreated Asylum Seekers. Departure was held up 4 hours. There was no other medico available. By the end of the trip they invited me to join them on the tour bus that they had organised to see Iceland. I wonder what they would have done if I said I was Jewish. Would that have negated my Australian identity?